

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Date Feb. 28, 2023

Melanie Wilde-Lane, Executive Director of The CT Association of School Based Health Centers

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Berthel, Representative Nuccio and Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Isabel Gonillo. I am the Program Assistant working at the CT Association of School Based Health Center. Melanie Wilde-Lane, the Executive Director could not be here with you today and apologizes for her absence. I am here to read to you, her testimony.

I come before you today to testify about H.B. 6659 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Every child deserves a chance to be healthy and to reach their full potential in life, but many children have health problems that make it difficult for them to learn and succeed. We all want young people in CT to be healthy and thriving. School-based health centers play a vital role in helping young people with their medical, mental and oral health concerns. Healthy kids make better learners.

Today, CT has over 130 fully comprehensive school based health centers, meaning those centers provide both medical and mental health services and in some cases dental as well. CT also has over 150 expanded school health sites which provide a single service. Of all of the school based health centers throughout the state just over 90 are partially funded by the Department of Public Health. As you all know, our school-based health centers provide services to any student enrolled regardless of economic, insurance, or documentation status and there are no out of pocket costs to families, meaning guardians do not have to pay us their co-pays and those with high deductible plans do not pay us their deductible portion. We bill towards the deductible, but again there is not out of pocket costs to the families. Currently, any student without insurance receives services at no cost. Therefore, our school based health centers, while we bill insurance companies are not being reimbursed for many of these visits. Students with high deductible plans may see our providers all school year and never once are we paid for that service if their deductible is not met. An undocumented student may receive all of their primary medical care and sick visits at our school based health centers and that SBHC receives no payment. With the impending changes to renewing Medicaid coverage as of March 31st, we expect to see large numbers of uninsured students come through our doors.

The Association understands that the goal is to have all of our school-based health centers be sustainable, but we are far from there.

The budget was cut by \$429,000 and we have yet to hear an explanation of why. We have been met with “I’ll look into it and I’ll get back to you” and even with diligent follow-up, we have heard nothing about why this cut has occurred. In general a fully comprehensive SBHC receives about \$100,000 each in DPH funding and that’s not nearly enough to cover the costs. However, this cut could affect as few as 4 fully comprehensive clinics.

I ask the Appropriations Committee to please support, continue and increase this vital funding. I ask that the \$429,000 be placed back into this line item and that this committee asks why? Why in a time of need, why when the state is attempting to fund MORE resources for students healthcare was this cut suggested? This is critical to student’s futures. I also ask that you consider supporting the expansion of School Based Health Centers, removing many of the barriers to accessing the care our youth need. Thank you for supporting School Based Health Centers.

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Wilde-Lane
Isabel Gonillo